

Literacy B.C. Newsletter

Volume 1, Number 2

February 1991

Plain Language- What's it all about?

Too often because of our training, we write and communicate in language which can not be easily understood by everyone.

The basic principle behind Plain language is to write for our reader - and that includes basic readers.

According to Joan Acosta, "Plain Language writing is not easy, it takes time to rewrite and edit. The key is to remember who you are writing to, and say it straight."

Here are five strategies you can use in writing Plain Language. These are taken from a book called Writing on Our Side which was compiled by the Progressive Literacy Group in 1986.

1. Make people the subject when you describe a situation. In other words, be clear about who is doing what. For example, instead of "eighty people were in attendance", say "eighty people came to the meeting."
2. Tell a story if you can and tell it in the order that it happens.
3. Talk to your reader, write it plainly. Be clear about who you are, why you are writing to them and what you want.
4. Use ordinary words, avoid idioms. If you need to use technical words, explain them.
5. Avoid complex sentences.

Two other reference books on Plain Language which are available through your local bookstores are:

HOW TO WRITE PLAIN ENGLISH

Rudolph Flesch, Harper & Row 1979

TEACHING PATIENTS WITH LOW LITERACY

SKILLS Cecelia/Leonard Doak, Jane Root

Literacy BC First Annual Conference

The first Annual Conference and Annual General meeting will be held June 21 & 22, 1991 in Vancouver. We would like your comments and suggestions so that the Conference covers topics that will be helpful to you all.

If you would like to present a session, suggest a topic or recommend a speaker, please contact:

Linda Mitchell

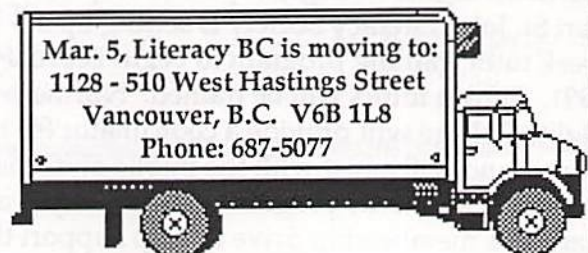
1128-510 W. Hastings Street

Vancouver, B.C.

V6B 1L8

Phone: 687-5077

Registration information and further details will be sent to you by April 1/91



the news from across BC

Project Literacy Abbotsford/Matsqui

Contact: Wendy Watson 853-7441.

Project Literacy Abbotsford/Matsqui is very happy to announce the opening of the M.S.A. Hospital Basic Skills Upgrading Program. The Learning Centre, which opens for instruction March 4, 1991, is designed to meet the literacy and upgrading needs of hospital shiftworkers. The Centre will open four days a week from 12:30 - 4:30 pm.

Partners in this project are the M.S.A. Hospital, the Hospital Employees Union, the B.C. Nurses Union, the Health Sciences Association, Fraser Valley College and Project Literacy Abbotsford/Matsqui. The project has been modelled after similar hospital workplace literacy programs in the Lower Mainland.

What distinguishes the M.S.A. Hospital workplace literacy project from earlier projects is the unique nature of the funding. This project has been entirely financed through community fund raising activities in co-operation with other project partners.

Funds have been raised through performances of John Lazarus' play "Marks on Paper", by Project Literacy Abbotsford/Matsqui literacy students. Additional funding has come from the Hospital Employees Union, Matsqui/Abbotsford Foundation Society, Soroptomist International, the Vancouver Foundation and several other service clubs.

For more information about the project contact: Senga Cirero 853-2201 or Wendy Watson 853-7441.

Fort St. John Literacy Society

Contact: Romi Haseo 785-3731

Northern Lights College, in partnership with the Fort St. John Literacy Society is setting up a 6 week tutor training program to begin February 26, 1991. Fifteen tutors will be trained. Northern Lights College will provide a coordinator for the project and will assist with the public awareness campaign about the program. The Society is also starting a membership drive to help support their work.

Fraser Valley East Literacy Association

Contact: Gail Newby 858-4913

Guest speaker at the February 13 meeting was Bali Stein, Principal of the Regional Centre for Children with Learning Disabilities.

Fraser Valley East Literacy Association has received a grant for a learners event which will be held May 1, 1991 at Fraser Valley College, Chilliwack campus. The event will be a community forum on learning disabilities. The hoped for outcome is the establishment of support groups for learning disabled adults and for parents of learning disabled children. School District #33 and the Fraser Valley Regional Library are also assisting with this event. The Association has piloted a Speakers Bureau of Board members and learners to help raise awareness in the Fraser Valley East area.

Project Literacy Houston

Contact: Sandy Lavallie 846-7266

Recently Project Literacy Houston was awarded \$12,500 from the Ministry of Health, Healthy Communities Initiatives to produce a video and radio PSA's which will raise local awareness about literacy and about the programs available in Houston. Sandy Lavaille reports that their application to the Ministry of Health had many components but the only one funded was for this literacy initiative. Sandy feels this is a "significant statement from the health perspective".

Literacy Kitimat

Contact: Janette Camazzola 632-3139

This group is working with the support of Kitimat Community Services who provide space, resources and assistance with mailing. The local School District provides meeting space and library services. Janette reports that because of the great need in their community, they will be providing ESL training for their tutors. Currently there are fourteen tutors working with learners.

the news from across BC

Literacy Nanaimo

Contact: Carolyn McWhinnie 754-1704

Literacy Nanaimo is pleased to announce the opening of its new office at:

201 Albert Street

Nanaimo, V9R 6E1

Phone: 754-8988

This location is conveniently located and will be a drop-in/information office and a place for tutors and learners to meet. Malaspina College is providing a half time volunteer coordinator for the Literacy Nanaimo programs. The new space has been donated by Grey Power and it is hoped that more seniors will become involved with the work of Literacy Nanaimo.

Project Literacy Prince George

Contact: Murry Krause 561-1040

The group has recently received cost shared funds to implement a Community Literacy Coordination project. They hope to hire a coordinator by March 4, 1991.

In partnership with the College of New Caledonia and School District #57 Project Literacy Prince George is conducting a needs assessment survey related to possible outreach activities. They have targeted two large apartment complexes in Prince George and are surveying literacy needs related to low income families and ESL.

Project Literacy Prince George is putting together a northern cast for "Marks on Paper". So far, eleven students have volunteered for the cast. The next meeting will be March 8, 1991 when an official Board of Directors will be elected.

Literacy Smithers

Contact: Dina Hansen 846-9214

Currently there are twelve tutors marched with learners and another tutor training session is planned for the beginning of March. In addition, ESL training will be offered to trained tutors in April. This training will be done jointly with Project Literacy Houston.

The group has been busy speaking to community groups and agencies in a effort to raise awareness and to raise funds for teaching resources for their tutors. They are also using local media to encourage learners to become involved.

Project Literacy Terrace

Contact: Larry Bolingbroke 635-6511

The group had a busy January and have some changes in their organization. Ella Goodlad has resigned as President due to time constraints. Gillian Campbell is now the President. Larry Bolingbroke is Vice President and Patti Barnes is Secretary Treasurer.

Currently they are trying to locate a downtown building location to be used as a learning centre. Due to the high cost of building they are now considering a private residence. They need to find a building that does not have stairs and is easily accessible to physically challenged people.

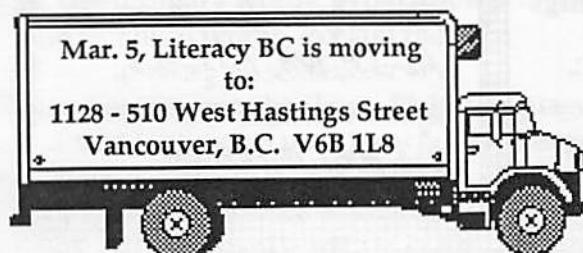
Project Literacy West Kootenays

Contact: Judy Wearmouth 365-7765

Sue Port has resigned from the Board of Project Literacy West Kootenay and is now the paid coordinator for the group.

As Project Literacy West Kootenay covers a large geographical area, there are now individual groups meeting in Nelson, Trail and Castlegar, operating under the umbrella of Project Literacy West Kootenay.

Recently, Joyce Cameron provided training for trainers sponsored by Project Literacy West Kootenay.



the news from across BC

Tumbler Ridge Literacy Group

Contact: Janet Hartford 242-3915

Currently fourteen members are receiving tutor training from Northern Lights staff. The training is 6 weeks in length and they are using the Literacy Volunteers of America program. The Tumbler Ridge group has elected a Board of Directors and are applying to incorporate as a Society. They recently received a donation of \$300 from the Lions Club and \$1200 from the District of Tumbler Ridge for teaching resources and to help with public awareness.

Each year the Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce hosts a Winter Carnival. As part of the carnival, the Literacy group will sponsor the Annual Bonfire. Activities will include music, a singalong and story reading.

Comox Valley Literacy Project Group

Contact David Driedger 334-3369

A local bank has asked the community for suggestions for improving their customer service. Two learners and a staff member from North Island College are preparing a list which will help to make banking services more accessible for learners.

Corrections to the Literacy BC Directory:

Please make the following changes to the Literacy BC Directory mailed to you in December 1990.

Malaspina Region

the new address for Wayne Kingston is:
13 - 3326 Rock City Rd.

Nanaimo, BC V9T 1T5 Phone: 756-3094

East Kootenay region contact:

Mae Williams

Box 147

Fernie, BC V0B 1M0 Phone: 423-7591

Literacy BC, founded in March 1990, is a coalition of people and groups concerned with promoting literacy in B.C.

Our mission is to promote literacy, to support literacy learners, to develop community partnerships and to present a united voice on literacy. We are supported by the National Literacy Secretariat, Department of Secretary of State of Canada, and by donations.

Literacy BC welcomes your news and comments by phone, mail or the Adult Literacy Contact Centre's fax, # 684-8520. We do reserve the right to edit all submissions. This newsletter will be published bi-monthly.

Bulletin Board

Announcing:

Literacy BC is pleased to announce that Mary Humphries has been elected as Regional Representative for the Northern Lights region. Mary can be contacted at:

9705 97th Street
Fort St. John, BC
V1J 4L2
Phone: 785-4289

**March 5
Literacy B.C. is
moving. The new
address is:**

**1128-510 W. Hastings
St.
Vancouver, B.C.
V6B 1L8**

**Phone: 687-5077
(ALCC) Fax: 684-8520**

*Literacy BC is looking for a writer/
researcher to do two short term
projects. One is to prepare a
bibliography of all recent literacy
related materials produced in BC,
the second is to compile a community
resource kit for literacy groups.
The closing date for applications is
March 11, 1991. For further
information contact:
Linda Mitchell at 687-5077*